

FROM THE CHAIR

Letter from the Chair

By *Patrícia Medici*

I would like to start this Letter from the Chair by mentioning how very, very proud I am of the Tapir Specialist Group! Earlier this year we all got together once again for the Fourth International Tapir Symposium held in Parque XCARET in Quintana Roo, Mexico, from April 26th to May 1st. During the conference, we had the chance to look back and evaluate what we have done since the Third Symposium in Argentina in 2006 and it was absolutely amazing to realize how much we have accomplished as a group! It is truly incredible and reflects our group's continuous commitment to the conservation of the four tapir species and their habitat.

The Fourth International Tapir Symposium was another extremely successful event of the Tapir Specialist Group, another landmark in our history, and most of this issue of *Tapir Conservation* will be dedicated to providing information generated during the conference. In this issue you will find a detailed report and pictures of the conference as well as reports from all our TSG Committees, Taskforces, and Working Groups.

On behalf of the main organizers of the Fourth International Tapir Symposium, including the Tapir Specialist Group, Parque XCARET in Mexico, Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), and European Association of Zoos & Aquaria (EAZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), I would like to thank all participants and all organizations that provided institutional and/or financial support for the conference.

We had 90 participants, including tapir conservationists from 22 countries worldwide (Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, France, French Guiana, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States). The conference had the financial and/or institutional support from over 90 conservation organizations worldwide, mostly tapir holding zoological institutions in North America, Europe, Latin America and Asia. We could not be more grateful for their contributions and, most importantly, their confidence in the importance of this meeting.

During the entire process of the organization of this conference, we had the full support from our major partner on this challenge, the Parque XCARET in Mexico, and the Tapir Specialist Group will always remain thankful for this. On behalf of the entire TSG membership and all symposium participants, I would like to thank the entire XCARET staff, especially Efrain Rios Castillo, for all their assistance in making the conference happen. Also, I would like to thank our TSG member Alberto Mendoza who was a major part of our symposium planning committee and who went out of his way to make this conference happen! This conference would not have happened without Alberto's energy and hard work.

A more detailed report about the Fourth International Tapir Symposium, including a complete list of all our supporters is included on this issue.

As always, the last session of the conference was the **TSG Strategic Planning Workshop**. The main goal of this session was to evaluate what the TSG has accomplished over the past two years since the Fourth Symposium in Argentina and develop a new strategic plan for the group. Dr. Bengt Holst, an active member of the Tapir Specialist Group and Convener of the European Network of the IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG), and myself (as a facilitator of the Brazilian Network of CBSG) facilitated the workshop. During this session, we split the participants in topic-based working groups and guided them through the process of thinking about and discussing the TSG's future challenges and demands, as well as setting short-term goals and actions for the next three (3) years in order to be more effective in terms of tapir conservation worldwide. I say three



Baird's tapir exhibit at Parque XCARET, Mexico.

years because during the conference in Mexico we decided that from now on the Tapir Symposium will be held every three years instead of two, which will give us more time to establish tapir research and conservation initiatives, and produce tapir conservation knowledge. Additionally, holding the conference every three years will give our donors more time in between events.

The final outcome of the TSG Strategic Planning Workshop held in Mexico was a list of twenty-two (22) priority goals and sixty-one (61) specific actions that the TSG will put into practice over the next three years (2008-2010) in order to reach the goals between now and the Fifth International Tapir Symposium to be held in 2011. The final version of the TSG Strategic Plan 2008-2010 will be made available online on the TSG Website very soon and I would like to ask all TSG members and symposium participants to please review the document and let me know if you have any questions, comments, suggestions, criticisms etc. This document is extremely important for the TSG and will guide our work over the next three years. We need our entire membership to be familiar with our priority goals and actions as a group. Additionally, I would like to invite all of you to please get involved with our activities, committees, taskforces and working groups, and contribute as much as you can. Most importantly, each of the 61 actions is attached to the name of a person responsible for completing it and we do expect that those named will step up to the task.

During the conference in Mexico we made several changes to the TSG Membership. A few members were removed from the group, mostly because of lack of participation in the group's activities, and new members were added. We now have **121** members, including field researchers, educators, veterinarians, governmental agencies and NGO representatives, zoo personnel, university professors and students, from **27** different countries worldwide: Argentina, Australia,

Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, France, French Guiana, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, Republic of Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Thailand, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States, and Venezuela.

Additionally, we made several necessary changes in our TSG Structure:

- We have a new Species Coordinator for Baird's Tapir, Manolo García from Guatemala.
- We have new Editors for the *Tapir Conservation* newsletter: Michael Dee from the United States for English contributions and Diego Lizcano from Colombia for Spanish contributions. Kelly Russo from the Houston Zoo in the United States and Stefan Seitz from Germany will continue as our Layout and Distribution Editors. Additionally, we put together a new Editorial Board for *Tapir Conservation*, which is now formed by Patrícia Medici (Brazil), Mathias Tobler (Switzerland/Peru), Anders Gonçalves da Silva (Canada), Alan Shoemaker (USA), Matthew Colbert (USA), Carl Traeholt (Denmark/Malaysia), Budhan Pukazhenth (USA), and Benoit de Thoisy (France/French Guiana).
- We have officially established our TSG Action Plan Implementation Taskforce, with different Focal Points for different tapir species and some specific relevant issues. More details about this taskforce can be found in a TSG report included in this issue.
- Our Marketing and Education Committees, previously coordinated by Gilia Angell and Kelly Russo respectively, have been merged. From now on, Gilia and Kelly will co-coordinate a new committee called Marketing and Education Committee.
- We reviewed the coordination and membership of all our different committees, taskforces, working groups etc. Each coordinator was requested to re-structure his/her committee and make sure to communicate effectively with the members. Each coordinator was requested to provide a report for this issue of *Tapir Conservation*.
- We reviewed TSG Country Coordination. We contacted all of our Country Coordinators in order to assess their interest to continue in their positions and to explain that we need their active participation if we want to successfully implement our new Strategic Plan. Most of the Country Coordinators reaffirmed their interest to continue their work, help the TSG implement the Strategic Plan and develop National Action Plans for their countries (which was the original goal when we created the Country Coordinator position). However, some Country Coordinators resigned due to busy schedules and lack of time to dedicate to the TSG.

As a consequence, we are currently searching for Country Coordinators for Venezuela, Belize, Nicaragua, Panama and Thailand.

- Now that our Tapir Re-Introduction and Translocation Taskforce has finalized its main goal of developing and publishing the TSG Guidelines for Tapir Re-Introduction and Translocation, it has turned into an Advisory Committee to assist any researchers and organizations planning on establishing re-introduction and/or translocation programs. I will be coordinating the Re-Introduction and Translocation Advisory Committee. More details about the activities of this advisory committee can be found in a TSG report included in this issue.
- As I mentioned before, from now on we will hold the International Tapir Symposium every three (3) years instead of two. Therefore, we decided to put together a **TSG Steering Committee** formed by key, active TSG members that could meet once or twice during the 3-year intervals in between conferences in order to carry out mid-term assessments of the implementation of the TSG Strategic Plan. We discussed this idea and selected **14** TSG members representing a core group including all species and themes such as in-situ/ex-situ conservation, NGOs, universities, different TSG committees/taskforces/working groups etc. (genetics, zoo, veterinary, newsletter, marketing/education, re-introduction/translocation, red listing, virtual library etc.), some species coordinators, some country coordinators, AZA and EAZA Tapir TAG members, Latin America, Europe, USA, Southeast Asia etc. The members of the TSG Steering Committee are: Alan Shoemaker (USA), Alberto Mendoza (Mexico/USA), Anders Gonçalves da Silva (Canada), Bengt Holst (Denmark), Carl Traeholt (Denmark/Malaysia), Diego Lizcano (Colombia), Gilia Angell (USA), Jeffrey Flocken (USA), Kelly Russo (USA), Mathias Tobler (Switzerland/Peru), Michael Dee (USA), Olga Montenegro (Colombia), Rick Schwartz (USA), and Viviana Guse (Argentina). We strongly believe that this is something that will help us be more efficient in terms of monitoring the implementation of our Species Action Plans and TSG Strategic Plan. And last but not least, it will take some of the TSG responsibilities off my shoulders, giving our membership a lot more freedom to make decisions and take the lead on different TSG initiatives!!!

The updated versions of both our TSG Membership and TSG Structure directories are included in this issue. Please review your name, title, job positions, and contact information please let us know if these must be updated. The directories of members of all different committees, taskforces, working groups,

species coordinators, country coordinators etc. have been made available online on the TSG Website.

On a final note, I would like to announce that the Fifth International Tapir Symposium will be held in Malaysia, most probably in Kuala Lumpur, in April 2011. We decided it is about time to bring our tapir conference to Southeast Asia! Our TSG Coordinator for Malayan Tapirs, Dr. Carl Traeholt, and our TSG Country Coordinator for Malaysia, Zainal Zainuddin, both based in Malaysia, have already started the process of identifying a venue for the event as well as potential local partners.

We hope to see all of you in Malaysia in 2011!!!
All the best from Brazil!

Patrícia Medici

M.Sc. Wildlife Ecology, Conservation and Management
Research Coordinator, Lowland Tapir Conservation Initiative

IPÊ - Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas (Institute for Ecological Research)

Ph.D. Candidate, Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE), University of Kent, United Kingdom

Chair, IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group (TSG)

Convener, IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG) - Brazil Regional Network

Rua Tiradentes, 759, Centro, Corumbá CEP: 79302-050, Mato Grosso do Sul, BRAZIL

Phone & FAX: +55-67-3232-5842

Cell Phone: +55-18-8119-3839; +55-67-9965-6960

E-mail: epmedici@uol.com.br



TSG Strategic Planning Workshop held during Fourth International Tapir Symposium at Parque XCARET, Mexico, from April 26th to May 1st, 2008.
Credits: Tim Stahl